

FIREPROOF YOUR MARRIAGE (& Relationships) Part 2 of 4 9.28.08

The “Shulamite” Principle from SONG OF SOLOMON = mutual possession

Last week we began our “Fireproof” series in Hosea, sharing what I call the “Gomer Principle” = UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

Simply – if we and our marriage partner or Christian friend each practice unconditional love, drawing from the resources of the Lord, we can “fireproof” our relationship from the hellish flames of the enemy.

Today, we build on that principle and seek to further “fireproof” our marriage and relationships as we look to the book of Song of Solomon.

- Solomon, the third and last king of the united Israel, wrote 3 of the poetic books of the Bible. PROVERBS is pure wisdom – most of it writing by the man who God said was the wisest man who ever lived. (1 Kings 3:12)
- ECCLESIASTES tells of the vanity of trying everything and anything the world has to offer
- SONG OF SOLOMON is the antithesis of Ecclesiastes – telling of the perfect meaningfulness in the absolute beauty of Christ (typified by Solomon and his lover wife: the Shulamite maiden, who is the type of Christ’s church)
- Some interpret SoS as LITERAL – leaving it to be only a love story between a man (Solomon) and a woman (the Shulamite)
- Others see SoS as pure ALLEGORY – making the story only speaking of God and His people and Christ and the church.
- I choose to see SoS as a balance between the two – a TYPE, or TYPICAL – thus both teaching about the perfect love of a healthy, Godly marriage AND about the perfect relationship between God and His people.

So, as we teach principles tonight – allow these principles to have a 3-fold depth of application:

1. To one’s personal relationship with Jesus (and the church body with Jesus)
2. To a husband’s Godly, romantic relationship with his wife
3. To a Christian’s relationship to another Christian in Godly love

Solomon 1:1 begins declaring that this book is “**The Song of Songs**” written by Solomon.

This is not just “a” song, or “another” song – it is the ultimate song of unashamed abandon; the best song ever sung – the song above every other song that could be sung. Thus, it is indeed the song of the LOVE OF GOD to His beloved children, and their reciprocal RESPONSE OF LOVE. This verse indicates, more than any other, that this book of poetry is to be interpreted beyond just the song of love between a man and woman – it speaks of the SPIRITUAL INTIMACY POSSIBLE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN – and the great intimacy possible between a man and woman

Every song has a refrain or chorus – that which repeats again and again to define the primary purpose of the song. It is the KEY to the song. It is the REASON for the song. Verses with additional thoughts come between the choruses – adding detail and description. But the refrain is the defining thought of the song.

- Song of Solomon has such a refrain – a phrase that is reiterated no less than 3 times.
- It is found in 2:10, 6:3 and 7:10, and it is this: **“I AM MY BELOVED’S AND HE IS MINE.”**
- **I call it the “Shulamite Principle” = MUTUAL POSSESSION**
- God “owns” or “possesses” me = I am His
- And, in a manner of speaking, I “own” or “possess” God (by His gracious allowance) = He is mine

I don’t mean to say that I in any way restrict God, or contain Him in some kind of self-made “box.” But rather, there has been a contract enacted, a payment paid, and a commitment made that has resulted in a relationship that cannot be broken. I belong to Him and He allows Himself to belong to me in MUTUAL POSSESSION.

J. Sidlow Baxter in his book entitled “His Part and Mine” explains it this way:

I AM HIS

1. by creation (He made me)
2. by election (He chose me)
3. by redemption (He bought me)
4. by the gift of choice (He accepted me)

HE IS MINE

- by promise (of relationship offered)
- by covenant (of grace extended)
- by love (freely given)
- by salvation (one in Christ)

Likewise, MUTUAL POSSESSION should bind a marriage together. A contract enacted, love promised, shared intimacies, commitments made and God’s miracle of making the two one should result in a relationship that is characterized by mutual ownership of the other.

1. We belong to one another because God MADE ME FOR THIS RELATIONSHIP
2. We belong to one another because God CHOSE US FOR ONE ANOTHER
3. We belong to one another because I COMMITTED MYSELF TO THIS UNION
4. We belong to one another because HE/SHE ACCEPTED THAT COMMITMENT

In a lesser, but still meaningful way, the same can be said about a healthy, Godly relationship between two believers. Time invested, love expressed and the shared tie of the Holy Spirit results in a mutual ownership of and responsibility to the other.

To help FIREPROOF these relationships, we must consciously practice the principle of MUTUAL POSSESSION = what I call the “Shulamite Principle”

We recall 1 Corinthians 6:19 where God says, “Or do you not know, that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own.”

Jesus, in John 15:5, describes it this way: I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

To simplify this principle for our better understanding, and to distill the contents of Song of Solomon into what we can appropriate in just the few moments we have – let me suggest that the principle of MUTUAL POSSESSION says basically 3 things to the other:

- 1. I am BEAUTIFUL because of you**
- 2. I am BETTER because of you**
- 3. I am BELOVED because of you**

Let’s look at each in turn, from Song of Solomon.

I am BEAUTIFUL because of you

- The Shulamite maiden in 1:5 says: “I am black, but lovely.”
 - Black: Just as the tents of Kedar are black (with the skin of black sheep)
 - Lovely: Just as the curtains of Solomon (in their many textures and hues)
- She was black by the heavy tanning of the sun (1:6)
 - She was estranged (“my mother’s sons were angry with me”)
 - She was enslaved (“they made me caretaker of the vineyards”)
 - She was unfulfilled (“I have not taken care of my own vineyard”)
- THIS IS EXACTLY HOW WE ARE SPIRITUALLY (before Christ takes us) and MARITALLY (before our spouse takes us)
 - 1) estranged from intimate relationship
 - 2) enslaved to self
 - 3) unfulfilled in ourself
- Spiritually we were BLACK with sin. But when Christ covers us with His blood and chooses us in LOVE we are LOVELY, or BEAUTIFUL IN THIS SIGHT
- Note the bridegroom’s response to her
- v. 8 “If you do not know, most beautiful among women . . . “
- v. 15 “How beautiful you are, my darling . . .”
- I am BEAUTIFUL because Christ has made me so.
- In a similar way, I am BEAUTIFUL because my spouse, or friend has made me so

- This understanding should revolutionize my appreciation and response of love.
- v. 16 “How handsome you are, my beloved . . .”

I am BETTER because of you

- In 2:10-13 the bridegroom bids His beloved to “*arise*” and “*come along*”
- This speaks of being challenged by God to become more like Himself
- In 2:14 the bridegroom says “*O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the steep pathway, let me see your form, let me hear your voice . . .*”
- This again speaks spiritual challenge – to hide ourself in the Rock that is Jesus and ascend the “steep pathway” of likeness and proximity to Himself
- Finally, in 2:15 He says “*Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards . . .*”
- This speaks of growth in our confessing sins and getting rid of the “little sins” = foxes in our life that prevents greater spiritual maturity.
- All of these verses speak of my being BETTER as a Christian because of God’s continual challenge to be like His son, Jesus
- IN A SIMILAR WAY – our spouse, or even Christian friend, should be a motivation to be BETTER as they challenge to spiritual growth and to deal with our sins. This is the result of MUTUAL POSSESSION.

I am BELOVED because of you

- We should all agree that we don’t deserve love – from God because of our sin, and from others because of our sinfulness
- Ultimately, we are BELOVED because of what God has made possible in our MUTUAL POSSESSION.
- In 2:16 we see the first of the 3 choruses that say “My beloved is mine, and I am his.
- In 6:3 is the second chorus, said in reverse order: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.
- And finally, in 7:10 we see the third chorus: “I am my beloved’s and his desire is for me. This last chorus is stronger yet in emphasizing how much I am loved by God.
- And because of this Divine love, I am able to love others.
- (*1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.*)
- In a similar way it is the choosing of us by our spouse, or friend – and the love that is shown to us despite our many sins and faults, that allows us to accept being “BELOVED” and we are able to LOVE OURSELVES.

Let me speak specifically to married couples at this point (and singles, you can apply these principles to your own friendships)

1. Tell your spouse often, in many ways, how BEAUTIFUL and HANDSOME and DESIRABLE they are to you. Exalt them, extol their qualities and honor their strengths.
This act of MUTUAL POSSESSION (remember you are one together – you are ministering to yourself as well) will help FIREPROOF your marriage
2. Challenge your spouse to greatness – spiritually, physically, emotionally, socially. Don't "bug" them, but as their good and best friend, urge them to become better. And accept this challenge from the other. This is the privileged role of those who share MUTUAL POSSESSION. As you challenge one another to a higher place, you help FIREPROOF your marriage.
3. Thank your spouse for LOVING YOU. Do it often with sincerity. Let him/her know that you are stronger and better able to LOVE back and LOVE others because of his/her LOVE of you. Accept their love and give it back, freely.

REMEMBER, that because of the principle of MUTUAL POSSESSION ("I am my beloved's, and he is mine") we are BEAUTIFUL, CHALLENGED and LOVED by our Lord, marriage partner and even our friend.

**PRACTICE PRINCIPLE #1 – Unconditional Love and
PRACTICE PRINCIPLE #2 – Mutual Possession**